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THE EASTERN
QUESTION

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THE EASTERN QUESTION

EUROPE has never been without an 'Eastern Question' of some kind. The division between East and West is a very ancient one, and wherever such a division exists there must necessarily be a wide debatable land in which there will be interaction or conflict political, social, and religious. At times some powerful political organization, such as the Roman Empire, or a unifying spiritual force, such as Christianity, may impose peace on this debatable land and encourage a period of fruitful intercourse between the two 'civilizations', to use a convenient though a dangerous word. At other times, as for instance during the wars between Greece and Persia, at the time of the great Mahometan attack, or during the Crusades, East and West have been in violent spiritual and military conflict. The frontier has been shifted backwards and forwards, and it is difficult at any given moment to say where Europe ends and Asia begins. At all times there has been much that is Asiatic about the eastern part of the 'Europe' of our maps, and in the Middle Ages the frontier of Latin Christendom, of those countries whose religious life had its centre in Rome, was in many respects the boundary of Europe. In the south the Eastern Empire, that is to say that eastern half of the old Roman Empire which had its capital at Constantinople, tended to become more 'oriental' as time went on; and in the north there was a great difference between the Russians, who had been converted to Christianity by missionaries from Con-

stantinople, and the Poles, who owed religious obedience to Rome. This Asiatic character of eastern Europe was naturally intensified when in the thirteenth century the Mongols, a people who had come originally from northern China, conquered and settled in Russia, and when in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Ottoman Turks became the masters of the Balkan Peninsula and of many lands to the north of it. At the close of the Middle Ages, therefore, and for the two centuries that followed, the 'Eastern Question' was concerned with the Turks, their victories and their defeats. In the eighteenth century a new power appeared in the North, Russia, still in many respects oriental in character, but prepared and anxious to carry on with the now pacific and weakening Turkish Empire an uninterrupted struggle for the mastery of the East. Thus in the nineteenth century the Eastern Question was concerned with the relations between Russia and Turkey, as well as with the internal condition of those two empires. So matters stood in 1912; then suddenly with the first Balkan war and the driving back of the Turks to the region of Constantinople the whole problem was changed. The Turks seemed to be practically obliterated, the antagonism between the rival Christian nationalities that had once been under Turkish rule was raised to fever-heat, and, most ominous change of all, the danger of foreign intervention became acute. Hitherto it had been the aim of England and France, and indeed of all lovers of peace, to isolate the storm region in South-east Europe, to promote either better government under the Turks or to see that what they lost should be gained by the small Christian states and not by any of the Great Powers. Thus would both the peace of Europe be secured and the independence of small states. For the moment this policy was successful. The Turkish

spoils were divided between Greece, Bulgaria, and Servia, and the Great Powers looked on. Austria did, indeed, insist on the preservation of Albanian independence in order to limit Servia on the west ; but the proposal was in itself perfectly reasonable, though no doubt difficult to carry out, and it met with general agreement. Unfortunately that victory of peaceful diplomacy was not to be lasting. The racial quarrels within the old Turkish frontiers merged into a wider movement which extended far beyond the Balkan Peninsula, the Servian question passed into the Southern Slav question, and the diplomatic barriers which had been set up round the storm region were swept away. Russia and Austria came into the conflict and the world was ablaze. It would be absurd to say that Servia is the *cause* of the War ; that cause is to be found in much more far-reaching antagonisms, but it cannot be denied that it was the Eastern Question, in this its most recent phase, that provided the spark. That evil spirit which had so troubled our fathers, and which was thought to be finally laid when the Christians of Europe had been emancipated from the Turk, suddenly reappeared once more in fatal conspiracy with German war-policy.

These few words of introduction show how great is the part played in this Eastern Question by 'races', 'racial movements', and 'racial problems', and before describing the conditions in south-eastern Europe it is essential to turn for a moment to the meaning of this word, 'race'. It represents obviously enough certain broad distinctions between men. An Englishman, for instance, is in a number of ways unlike an Italian. But when we try to obtain an accurate definition we find that the term is elusive. What exactly is the Anglo-Saxon race ? Does it include the Scotch or the Irish ? If we make

'race' simply a matter of hereditary descent then English, Scotch, and Irish are all mixed races, and the 'Anglo-Saxon' race seems to vanish altogether. In order to get a clearer definition it is not uncommon to make language the test of race. Yet this is a most untrustworthy test. Men with very different racial characteristics often speak the same language. In any case it will tend very much to clearness of thought if we make a distinction between 'race' and 'nationality'. The latter term should be kept for the description of a definite body of people, large enough to be to some extent self-sufficient, who have a permanent wish to be united in a political community. Race, language, religion, past history, geographical position—all these bonds of union will help to produce the state of mind which makes a nationality, but they should not be confused with it. Thus the Swiss are a nation because they desire to be united politically. This desire they have in spite of the absence of nearly all the ties mentioned above; and it should be respected by other nations. In other words 'nationality' is a question of human will and desire, 'race' is one of hereditary descent or physical characteristics.

Now during the last hundred years race and language have had more influence on nationality than they have ever had before. In the eighteenth century, for instance, political and racial divisions cut across each other in many directions, and the French Revolution took no account of race. But in the nineteenth century the principle that populations of the same race and language should be politically united and independent gradually came to be recognized as almost self-evident. It became, in fact, one of the most powerful political forces of the century, breaking some states to pieces and building

up others. Its triumph, however, has not been without danger. In the earlier stages 'oppressed nationalities' naturally attracted sympathy; but in time nationalities, once they had grown powerful, proved that they too could be both oppressive and warlike, and they added racial bitterness to oppression and to war. It is not altogether an advantage that the wars of races have taken the place of the wars of kings. Again, race instead of being recognized simply as one of the sources of national feeling has been put in its place, physical characteristics have been preferred to human will and political loyalty. The people of Alsace, in spite of being German by descent, were enthusiastically attached to France; Germany, however, maintained that she had the 'right' to compel them to become Germans mentally as well as physically. To-day, too, there are many Germans who claim Holland and the Flemish parts of Belgium because the people in those countries are of Teutonic stock. We should not, therefore, be too ready to accept racial similarity as the basis of territorial rearrangements. Each case must be examined on its own merits. It is, indeed, quite possible that political systems which can link together different races, as the British Empire does, may prove a greater benefit to mankind than those in which political divisions are deepened by racial exclusiveness.

The Balkan Peninsula, to which we must now return, is a country where races were numerous and contentious even before the coming of the Turk; yet the share of these Turks in the Eastern Question has long been so predominant, and their power is still so much alive, that it is natural to begin with them.

The Ottoman Turks were a branch of a people who in the eleventh century had migrated from central into

western Asia, and who, though for a time driven back by the Crusades, settled down permanently in Syria and Asia Minor. This westward movement the Ottomans resumed once more in the fourteenth century. They crossed into Europe and rapidly extended their conquests over the greater part of the Balkan Peninsula. They owed their success to fine military qualities, to the mutual antagonisms between the small Christian states with whom they came into contact, and to the absence of any substantial or enduring resistance from the nations of the west. In 1453 Constantinople, and with it the last fragment of the Eastern Empire, fell into Turkish hands and became the capital of constantly expanding dominions. The great Sultans of the sixteenth century exercised a real, if unequal, authority over south-eastern Europe, western Asia, and northern Africa. Even as late as 1683 the Turks were knocking at the gates of Vienna. From that moment their decline was rapid, and they lost much territory in central Europe; but at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Turkish Empire still nominally included the whole of the Balkan Peninsula south of the Carpathians, and it had lost little in Asia or Africa. The ties which kept these scattered provinces together were religious and military. The immense majority of the Sultan's subjects were Mahometans, and amongst them, as amongst most Eastern peoples, patriotism is mainly religious. Acceptance of the Moslem religion overrides, to a degree astonishing to us, every distinction of colour, race, or class. A pure-blooded Turk who is as white as any European is prepared to treat a Mahometan negro on lines of absolute equality. Religion, too, as in mediaeval Europe, entered into everyday life, into the legal system, into military service, and into the political and social organization.

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It is indeed hard to think of any tie but religion which could bind together the many peoples and races, Berber, Egyptian, Arab, Syrian, Albanian, and Turk, which made up the Mahometan part of the Empire. This religious bond was strengthened by the fact that since 1517 the Sultans have been recognized as Caliphs by the larger of the two sects into which the Moslem world is divided. The Caliph is to some extent looked upon as the successor of the Prophet, though it is doubtful what authority the Sultan could exercise as Caliph beyond his own political dominions.

The government of the Turkish Empire was entirely oriental. The Sultan was supreme within the limits allowed him by Moslem religious law; and under him the governors whom he set over the different provinces were uncontrolled except by their fear of the Sultan, their fear of rebellion, and the strength of custom. A strong governor would sometimes make himself practically independent, and the Sultan might have to encourage a local rebellion in order to secure his fall. There was nothing corresponding to a legislature, nothing like a modern administrative system. Taxation was haphazard and primitive in its methods, and the property of individuals but very ill protected against the illegal exactions of the governor or his agents. Under such a system there was almost unlimited scope for personal tyranny, but there was none of that steady administrative pressure which a modern government can bring to bear upon a population. A bad governor might cause a great deal of suffering to his subjects, but he could effect no permanent change in their thoughts or their manner of living.

It is not easy for the West to understand the East. We may, therefore, easily exaggerate the evils of oriental

government. Much depended on the personal character of the ruler. Life and property were insecure: the economic development of the country, and the establishment of much that we know as civilization, was therefore impossible. Yet the supreme test of a government is the type of character which it produces or allows to develop. Judged by this standard the East has a strong defence. Few Europeans have acquired a knowledge of Eastern peoples without doing justice to many admirable qualities. Nor would it be easy to say whether, on the whole there is more happiness in the East or the West. Many of the worst moral and social evils which are the fruit of our economic conditions are absent in a simpler society where family life is very vigorous and men are content to live as their fathers lived before them. Though every European who has lived in the East realizes the necessity of many practical reforms, few would wish to see a wholesale introduction of Western civilization. It is evident, however, that such a system will be least successful where the bond of 'religious patriotism' is absent; and the government by the Turks of their Christian subjects became a difficult problem as soon as Turkey began to lose her prestige as one of the great military Powers of the world. It then became possible for foreign Powers to interfere in the internal government of Turkey, and to encourage resistance. Under such circumstances it is not surprising that the Turk was considered the 'sick man' of Europe, and that his speedy death was prophesied at intervals throughout the nineteenth century. It must be remembered, however, that his authority did not rest simply on his military power: no authority can do so for any length of time. It depended on the fact that, however bad his government might seem from a Western point of

view, it had at least the saving virtue of not interfering with the national habits and ideas of the different Christian peoples. No effort was made, even in the days when Turkish military power was unquestioned, to 'assimilate', to use government pressure in order to change the character of a people. On the contrary, the Turks, while treating the Christians as inferiors, still recognized their religion, their language, and even their corporate organization. Thus Bulgarian and Greek villages were able to live side by side and to preserve their national life in a manner which has been impossible since Turkish rule has been removed. Nor is it fair to account for this toleration by a cunning policy of strengthening Turkish authority by dividing its adversaries: for the Turks acted in this manner in the days of their strength as well as in the days of their weakness. It is rather to be explained by the oriental character of Turkish rule and their familiarity with the idea of political organizations based on religion.

The Turks, perhaps unfortunately for them, were not content to remain oriental. Throughout the last century there was a movement among them in favour of introducing European reforms. Some of these, such as the military reforms of Mahmoud II, were essential to the existence of Turkey; others were obvious practical reforms, such as the regular payment of officials. There were other changes more distinctively Western, such as the introduction of European education and dress, and attempts to imitate Western political institutions. This movement culminated in the 'Young Turkish' revolution of 1908. It was brought about by the impossible government of the late Sultan, who had set all the educated classes, whether Turkish or Christian, against him; and at first the 'Young Turks' included, besides others,

much of what was best in Turkey. After a time, however, the worst elements in the party began to prevail. These were partially westernized individuals who had often lived in European capitals and had, in any case, lost all respect for the religion and the practices of their own people—men, in a word, who illustrate the difficulty of combining East and West without loss of character. The constitution which the Young Turks set up was intended to conciliate the Christians, and it succeeded at first, but not for long; while, on the other hand, the army was revolutionized and weakened. The Balkan States saw their opportunity: and they succeeded, much to the surprise of Europe, in both forming a League and defeating the Turks. The Young Turkish party still appears to prevail at Constantinople, but it is to be hoped that its place may soon be taken by men who are better representatives of the good qualities of the Turkish race.

Without good qualities the Turks could not possibly have kept even elementary order in the Balkan Peninsula. It is a patchwork of rival nationalities, a population amongst whom a genuine love of fighting and an astonishing courage are found combined with a remarkable capacity for hatred and cruelty. The second Balkan war showed that these passionate little peoples could attack one another more fiercely than they had fought their old Moslem masters.

The relative positions of the Balkan States will be best studied in the map, but it must be remembered that so-called racial maps record the frontiers not of race but of language, and that in many districts, especially in Macedonia, such maps are of no value at all, since the races were inextricably mixed up with one another. Since the recent wars migration and massacre have considerably simplified these racial puzzles.

Of all the Christian populations of the Peninsula the Greeks are by far the most numerous. The old Greek stock has been mingled with many of the races which at different times have visited the country ; but, whatever their origin, the modern Greeks form a very distinct nationality, and they speak a language which, thanks to a modern classical revival, is very like ancient Greek. They played a great part in the old Turkish Empire ; for besides peopling Greece and the islands with a hardy and primitive population, they were scattered through all the towns and became successful merchants and administrators. The Turk has never taken kindly to any profession except those of the farmer and the soldier, and he was glad to use for all kinds of official work the Greek, whose military incapacity he despised. The Greeks were the first among the Christian races to secure the complete independence of at least a portion of their race. This success they won in 1828. They owed it more particularly to the indomitable perseverance of the semi-barbarous peasantry and islanders ; but since those heroic days it is the urban and educated Greek who has become the most characteristic type. The Greeks, too, controlled the ecclesiastical organization of the Christian subjects of Turkey. The immense majority of these belonged to the orthodox Greek Church, and its head was the Patriarch at Constantinople. The Turks, who were themselves organized on a religious basis, recognized the authority of the Patriarch and bishops over their flocks ; and all members of the Orthodox Church ; whatever their race, were habitually known as Greeks, just as all Moslems were called Turks. It was only by degrees, during the course of the nineteenth century, that the other Christian populations of Turkey, Servian, Roumanian, and Bulgarian, emancipated themselves from

this Greek rule. After the formation of the kingdom of Greece a very considerable Greek population still remained subject to the Turk. They were to be found particularly in Salonica, Constantinople, and all the coast towns round the Aegean Sea. They formed, too, the majority of the population in most of the islands; and in Crete, where they have preserved the vigour with the barbarity of the heroic days, they have steadily destroyed or pushed out the Turkish minority. On the mainland they have been more peaceful. They challenged the Turks indeed in 1897, but with very unfortunate results. They are very successful traders, and they have devoted much care and money to education. They are great politicians, but their politics have not got a good reputation. In the recent Balkan wars the Greeks fought much better than in 1897, but they had to meet neither the best Turkish nor the best Bulgarian troops. There can be no doubt, on the other hand, that they destroyed Bulgarian villages and their inhabitants in a cold-blooded manner and, apparently, with the deliberate purpose of claiming the districts as entirely Greek. Since Greece was the only Power which possessed a fleet she was able to secure a large share in the spoils of these wars. Salonica fell to her lot with 17,000 square miles of territory, and in addition to this a number of islands. For the present the appetite of Greece is probably satisfied, though she is doubtless allowing her semi-independent guerillas to invade southern Albania. Her main preoccupation must be to keep what she has recently acquired, and she probably looks for danger from two quarters, either from the buying or the building of a fleet by the Turks or from a Bulgarian revival. In the first case her newly acquired islands and her own coasts would be exposed, and in the second she might easily

lose some of her Macedonian conquests. We may hope that with enlarged territories and new responsibilities the Greeks may bring into their political life a dignity, a reserve, and an honesty which have hitherto been lacking; but in any case the Greek of the future is not likely to emulate the Greek of ancient days. It is no discredit to them to say that whatever may happen their great achievements lie behind them in the past.

It is the future which we instinctively think of when we turn to any section of the Slav race. The Slavs are the most numerous race in Europe. Out of a population of some 400,000,000 over 150,000,000 speak one of the numerous Slavonic languages. They are not recent immigrants into Europe. There is evidence of their existence, at least in the neighbourhood of the Danube, very early in our era. Their movements in the sixth and seventh centuries are on record. They are, therefore, an ancient as well as a very numerous race. Yet they seem to have profited neither by numbers nor time. Numbers should have meant power, and time brings opportunities for rule. As a matter of fact Slav 'empires' of considerable extent have from time to time come into being in different portions of the vast Slav lands. But they have never lasted more than a few generations. Russia is the one exception, and even in Russia there is hardly as yet a stable political organization. In the last century, however, there was much stirring among the Slavs. Russians, Poles, and Bohemians have in very different ways borne witness to the vitality of the race. It is difficult not to believe that they will play a very much greater part in the political history of the future. The most southern of all the Slav populations is to be found in south-eastern Europe occupying a

wide belt of country roughly speaking between the Danube and the Drave on the north-east, and the Adriatic on the south-west. The south-eastern half of this district is inhabited by the Servians; north-west of them come the Croatians, and finally a small Slav people, with whom we are not concerned, the Slovenes. East and partly south of the Servians are the Bulgarians, a people who speak a Slavonic language and have long been considered Slavs; but they are not Slavs by origin, and they will be dealt with later on. The Servians have been, on the whole, one of the more backward of the Slav peoples, though they had a brief period of glory in the fourteenth century, not long before their conquest by the Turks. They were often restive under Turkish rule, but rarely successful. A considerable number of Servians became Moslems. The first step towards their independence was made in 1812 with Russian help, and in 1878 the Kingdom of Servia secured its complete independence. It did not, however, include all the Servians. Austria was allowed to occupy the large province of Bosnia, and many Servians remained under direct Turkish rule. There was also the little principality of Montenegro established in a rugged and mountainous district not far from the Adriatic and peopled by men of Servian race. It had never owed much more than a nominal allegiance to the Turks, and for generations the Montenegrins carried on a ruthless vendetta warfare with their neighbours the Albanians. They too owed their independence in the nineteenth century to Russian patronage.

As a result of these territorial arrangements Servia became the centre of a movement for a 'Greater Servia'. Her ambition was to include within her frontiers all the people of her race. In the past Servia had often been

helped by Austrians against the Turks, but now Austria became the enemy because she occupied Bosnia, territory claimed by Servia, and because it was known that many Austrians hoped, if the Turkish Empire broke up, to push the Austrian dominions right down to the sea at Salonica. These territorial ambitions Servia only very partially satisfied after the two Balkan wars of 1912, the first against the Turks, the second against Bulgaria. To her original 3,000,000 inhabitants she added 1,700,000 more, but she was cut off from the Adriatic by Albania, and from the Aegean by the Greeks at Salonica, while Bosnia still remained in Austrian hands. The Servian problem is, however, still further complicated by its relations with Croatia. The Croats dwell to the north and north-west of Servia and Bosnia. They are closely allied to them, but they are a more educated and developed people. Most of them never came under the Turkish yoke, and they have long been members of the Austria-Hungarian Empire. Now it must be remembered that Austria-Hungary is a 'Dual Monarchy', that Austria proper and Hungary are almost separate countries. They have, for instance, distinct legislatures sitting in different capitals, Vienna and Buda-Pesth. The Croats are in the Hungarian part of the Dual Monarchy, and ever since the beginning of the Slav revival in the middle of the last century there has been almost uninterrupted friction between Croat and Hungarian. Of recent years the struggle between the two peoples has increased in intensity. Servia has naturally endeavoured to profit by this movement and to include Croatia in her schemes for a 'Greater Servia'. The Servians are born fighters and make excellent soldiers, but they have had in the past an unhappy fondness for assassination and intrigue. The murder

of their late king and queen was creditable neither to the army nor to the people. There can be no doubt that there was an extensive Servian movement within the borders of the Austrian dominions, a 'South Slav danger' threatening both Austria and Hungary, and all the more serious because of the known and natural sympathy between Russia and Servia. Unfortunately the Austro-Hungarian Governments have proved entirely incapable of dealing with this problem and finding any peaceful solution. The Archduke who was recently murdered had, indeed, been endeavouring to reconcile Austrians and Slavs by sacrificing Hungary. His plan was to separate the Slav districts from Hungary and to give them 'Home Rule'. This policy was opposed by the anti-Slav party at Vienna, by the Hungarians, who would lose a considerable province, and by Servians who hoped to unite to Servia the discontented Slavs under Austro-Hungarian rule. After the murder of the Archduke all idea of conciliation was abandoned, and both Austria and Hungary decided for war.

East of Servia, south of the Danube, is Bulgaria. The Bulgarian people seem to have come into Europe with the Huns. They were not Slavs, and spoke a language which did not belong to the European family of languages. Their original home probably lay in the plains north of the Caspian and farther east. Very soon, however, they acquired the language and many of the characteristics of the Slavs whom they conquered, and until the present day they have generally been spoken of as Slavs. Their recent war with the Servians has now revived these almost prehistoric distinctions. At different epochs during the Middle Ages the Bulgarians were the prevailing power in the Balkans, masters of the Slavs, and even at times the successful antagonists of Constantinople. After

the Turkish conquest they suffered an extraordinary eclipse. From a military point of view they were completely under Turkish control, and in other matters Greek influence prevailed entirely over Bulgarian. The ecclesiastical organization was Greek, Greek was the language of all the educated classes. Englishmen traversing the country in the first half of the last century spoke of the people as if they were all Greeks. Slowly, however, the Bulgarian nationality reasserted itself, especially after the Crimean War. By 1870 they had secured ecclesiastical self-government, and five years later they rebelled, largely in response to a Russian propaganda, against the Turks. That revolt was put down in a way which won for the Turks an unenviable notoriety, though recent events both in the Balkan Peninsula and elsewhere have shown that 'atrocities' are no Turkish monopoly. The Bulgarian revolt was followed by a Russian war on Turkey in 1877-8, and the victory of Russia led to the formation of the Bulgarian State. It consisted of the district between the Danube and the Balkans, with a semi-attached province south of the Balkans, a province which was definitely united to Bulgaria a few years later. This new principality was still nominally under Turkish suzerainty, and remained so till 1908, but its chief ambition was to extend itself to the Aegean and to include the districts where Bulgarian villages were to be found, though they might be mixed up with a Greek or a Turkish population.

The history of Bulgaria has been a very stormy one. Though the people owed much to the Russians they dreaded from the first the influence of Russia. On the one hand, Russian propagandism was carried on with extraordinary thoroughness; on the other, the Bulgarian Government fought hard for its independence. The

first Bulgarian Prince, Alexander of Battenberg, was kidnapped by the Russian party, and the strong-willed minister who ruled during the first years of the present sovereign was murdered. Recently the Bulgarian Government appears to have come more under Russian influence, and there is little doubt that the Balkan League which was formed by Ferdinand of Bulgaria against Turkey has secured at least the diplomatic support of Russia. In the war which followed the Bulgarians showed great military efficiency and were unexpectedly successful. Unfortunately for themselves, in a moment of madness they challenged their recent allies, suffered a series of defeats, and lost some of their conquests both on the western and their eastern frontiers. They are considered by many, however, to be the most progressive and the most efficient of the Balkan States, and their friends maintain that when they have recovered from the consequences of defeat and repaired their resources, they will once more endeavour to secure a predominant position in the Peninsula.

most northerly of the states that were included a century ago in the Turkish Empire is Roumania. The name was originally given to the language spoken by the inhabitants. The people themselves were generally known as Vlachs, and the country consisted of two principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia: they were currently spoken of as the 'Danubian Principalities'. The language is a Latin language, derived like Italian or French from the popular Latin of the Roman Empire. Considering, however, that what we now call Roumania lay right in the path of so many invasions from the east, of Goths, of Huns, of Slavs, and of other races who poured into the Roman Empire, it is extremely unlikely that the Roumanians represent the old inhabitants of

the Roman Province. They must be a very mixed race. During the period of Turkish supremacy the Principalities were never for long under direct Turkish rule, but normally enjoyed pretty complete autonomy. They suffered, however, very seriously from the Turco-Russian wars which began with Peter the Great and continued intermittently during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Russia exercised certain rights of Protectorate over them, and after 1859 the two principalities were united and called Roumania. In 1866 they elected as their Prince a member of the younger branch of the royal Prussian family, and in 1878 after the Turkish war, in which the Roumanians gave very valuable help to Russia, they secured their complete and formal independence of Turkey. Three years later their Prince took the title of King. The geographical position of Roumania makes it necessarily the most pacific of the Balkan States. Every disturbance of the *status quo* in the Balkans, anything which tends to weaken the separate states renders more likely a Russian intervention, and from such an intervention Roumania would be the first to suffer. She succeeded in almost entirely keeping out of the recent Balkan wars, though, in the interests of peace, she helped to bring about the surrender of Bulgaria. The Roumanians give the impression, therefore, of being the most 'western', the least 'barbaric' of this extraordinary group of little states. Like her sister states, however, Roumania has her national ambitions. Across the Carpathians, under Hungarian rule, live some three million Roumanians who would probably be willing enough to join their kinsfolk on the east. There are also little settlements of Vlachs scattered about the hills of the Balkan Peninsula itself, quiet folk without national

ambitions, as a rule, who got on very well with the Turks and were allowed by them to live in their own way. They will no doubt obtain more regular government but less toleration from their new Servian or Greek masters.

There remains yet another Balkan race, and that the oldest of all. The Albanians, who have been already mentioned as in a sense 'Turks' because they are mostly Moslems, are almost certainly the descendants of the tribes who occupied the same country in Roman times, and they may go back to very much earlier days. Securely established in their very inaccessible hills, they have watched many invaders come and go. The Turks never really conquered them, and they became Moslems chiefly that they might take part in the Turkish campaigns in central Europe. Besides the Mahometan Albanians in the centre, there are Catholic Albanians in the north, close to Montenegro, and Greek Albanians in the south, who are now included in the Greek kingdom.

Even this superficial survey of the Balkan Peninsula as it was in the past century will show that the task of maintaining law and order was one that would have taxed the resources, whether moral or material, of any government. The establishment by 1878 of the states of Greece, Servia, and Bulgaria diminished the responsibilities of the central government, but even then there remained Greeks, Servians, and Bulgarians under Turkish rule. These were constantly being encouraged by their independent kinsfolk to rise against the Turks and to struggle with one another. Nor were the reforms which the European Powers recommended and which the Sultan sometimes adopted of much avail, for the good government of Turkey was not at all to the interest of the Christian states. Each nationality was

working for its own independence and supremacy, not for a law and order which should be common to all.

Under such conditions it would not have been wonderful if from merely internal reasons European Turkey had become a scene of confusion and smouldering revolt. As a matter of fact, however, foreign intervention has been continually at hand to add to the confusion, and at times the Eastern Question seemed to be narrowed down to a struggle between Russia and Turkey. They were the two great antagonists in the East, and the weaker Turkey becomes the greater is the share which Russia will have in the ultimate solution. It is therefore more than ever essential to understand something of the character and aims of Russia.

It is difficult enough to describe briefly the character of any country, however compact and constant; but what can be said of Russia, a country which covers enormous spaces, includes numerous races, contains classes in very different stages of mental and social development, and where, for the last ten years, a revolution has been in progress partly violent, partly peaceful, which must necessarily affect the character both of the people and of the state? The only possible course is to describe Russia as she was in the nineteenth century, and then to suggest the direction in which changes may tend.

Russia till the close of the seventeenth century may be described, for the sake of brevity, as an 'oriental' state. The process of bringing her into 'Europe' was begun by Peter the Great and it continued fitfully during the eighteenth century, a time which was passed in alternating periods of Western influence and Russian nationalist reaction. During the later years of the century the work of Peter was carried on with extraordinary

success by Catherine II, a masterful woman born of a small German princely family. She understood better than any native Russian sovereign the national sentiments of the Russian people, while she carried out the policy of a great and unscrupulous European Power. The Napoleonic wars left Russia the predominant power on the Continent, and on the whole she maintained that position till near the end of the nineteenth century. The Crimean War was really a drawn battle which did not diminish her prestige. But though Russia was so important a European Power, she was still very unique in character. From a political point of view her population consisted of two very distinct classes. The mass of the people were still very oriental. They consisted then, as they consist now, of peasants to whom religion is really the chief foundation of the State. This vast peasant state was governed by an official class, centralized and autocratic. At its head were some of the ablest statesmen in Europe—few of them were in fact Russians by birth. The chief foreign minister from the time of Napoleon to the Crimean War could not even talk Russian. Between these intelligent, all-powerful officials and the mass of the population there was no intermediate middle class. There were indeed many men and women who had received a Western education in the Universities, people who combined knowledge and high intellectual endowments with something of the primitive Russian sentiments and passions. It was from among these 'intellectuals', as they are sometimes called, that the great novelists came, men who are among the princes in the world of European letters; it is among them too that most of the anarchists have been found. This class indeed, both on account of its passionate and unpractical character, and because of its want of contact

with the peasants, was not able seriously to control the official class. The result was a system of government tyrannous in many of its features to an extent incredible in the West. It was not till 1905 that some of the most elementary principles of religious freedom were admitted by the Russian state. Autocratic government at home was accompanied by a policy of systematic expansion abroad. To such an extent has this policy been successful that a little state, whose name was hardly known at the end of the seventeenth century, included two centuries later one-seventh of the land surface of the globe.

How far this policy of conquest was in accordance with the wishes of the Russian people it is difficult to say, but there can be no doubt that one of the forms which it took, conquest from the Turks, was profoundly popular. To the Russian people the Turkish war was the renewal of the Crusade, the manifest task of Holy Russia : to the statesmen and officials it meant a stage on the road to Constantinople and the Mediterranean. So throughout the nineteenth century the Turkish war continued uninterruptedly in its many shapes and forms. Sometimes it was direct conquest and annexation that was aimed at ; sometimes, as before the Crimean War, Russia tried to control Turkey by securing rights of protection over her Christian subjects ; sometimes, as in the last years of the century, she exercised what was practically a protectorate over the Turkish government itself. In all this policy Russia has had three difficulties to face : first, the military power of the Turks which ought to have been successful in 1829, which did succeed in 1854, and which was near success in 1877 ; secondly, the suspicion with which she was regarded by the Christian peoples in the Balkan Peninsula ; and thirdly, the opposition of

the Western Powers, though the importance of the help which they gave the Turks has been much exaggerated.

If the nineteenth-century policy of Russia can be described very broadly, and neglecting for the moment the reforms of Alexander II, as one of systematic expansion abroad and systematic repression at home, what are we to look forward to in the twentieth? It must be admitted, to begin with, that the high hopes with which the Russian Revolution of 1905 was greeted have not been fulfilled. Revolution has been followed by reaction, though the reaction has never been complete. The essentials of a representative system remain, though legislative power is still in the hands of the Emperor. Underlying this progress is an economic change. The growth of industry is gradually forming a middle class, and, considering what enormous undeveloped forces Russia controls, industry is certain to continue growing. At the same time the beginnings of constitutional liberty, the development of municipal government, and the many efforts made to deal with rural and other problems—all these forms of political and social activity will help to bring the educated classes, the 'intellectuals', into closer touch with the realities of political life, and to give them more sense of responsibility.

Amongst the most immediate consequences of the Revolution of 1905 were the restoration of autonomy to Finland and the grant of some measure of Home Rule to Poland, concessions which were withdrawn when the reaction prevailed at Petrograd. Should Russia, after this war, succeed in uniting under her suzerainty the three parts of divided Poland, the autonomy which has been promised the Poles will become a practical necessity, and the reconciliation between Pole and Russian ought

to change entirely the character of Russian rule ; it should mean the weakening of the central bureaucracy and a tendency towards a federal system. What has been granted to Poland and Finland will be demanded, though no doubt to a lesser extent, by South Russia. Indeed it is obvious that in a country so vast, so heterogeneous as Russia, decentralization is the first condition of any real constitutional progress. Reconciliation with Poland will also modify at once the relations between Russia and the other Slav peoples beyond her frontiers. A loose federal connexion with the Balkan States would be accepted by people who would look upon the supremacy of the old Russian Government in that Peninsula as in every way disastrous. It is at least conceivable that the great Slav movement of the future may be made compatible with the independence of other nations both great and small through this federal solution. A loose federal union between all the English-speaking peoples would not be a danger to the world ; but their formation into a strong centralized and military state would be regarded as an intolerable menace.

A change such as has been suggested in the character of the Russian state would probably modify at once her foreign policy. She has possessions so vast and so undeveloped that expansion, even from the most selfish motives, can hardly be desirable. It will be said, however, that she will still demand 'blue water' and a Mediterranean port, will still want the 'keys of her house', the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. Constantinople is indeed a position of great value to an aggressive state. Though it is not as important as it was in the days when politics were European only, and the chief export of wheat came from the Black Sea ports, a strong military power at that incomparable meeting-place of

seas and continents would change at once the whole situation in the Balkans and in Asia Minor; while Constantinople as a naval base would threaten every Mediterranean Power. Should Russia, however, content herself with a policy of peace and development the present situation offers her many advantages. For the last two centuries the Turks have fought none but defensive wars. Constantinople could therefore hardly be in more inoffensive keeping. The trade of Russia has an absolutely safe and free passage through the Straits, while the closing of the Dardanelles to ships of war secures the Black Sea coasts of Russia from attack.

However summary may have been this attempt to survey the conditions and the problems of Eastern Europe, it is clear that after the present war the Eastern Question will be one of absorbing interest. The fate of the Christian nationalities of the south-east and the relations between Christian and Moslem, between West and East, will still be in the balance. If the Allies win it is obvious that the solution of these problems will depend most of all on the character and conduct of Russia, and we have very good reason to hope that when the Slav comes to his own he will show in his political conduct that appreciation of moral forces which in very different ways has distinguished both the man of letters and the peasant.

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